

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you for this time to share our vision for moving forward with the American people. I wake up each day excited to come to work, to work on their behalf. Despite our divisions, despite the rancor we see sometimes on the various cable shows, it's an enormous honor to serve in this institution, and it's a great honor to serve in this institution with the gentleman. I must bid adieu. I have to get going, but thank you so much.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from California for highlighting the argument of economic growth and the critical nature of economic reform. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inquire as to how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 27 minutes remaining.

Mr. POLIS. We have the unique opportunity here in the United States Congress to reflect the will of the American people. The will of the American people is clear in this regard. In my time here, seldom, if ever, have I seen an issue where 80 percent, 75 percent, 84 percent of the American people agree. And here we are, the faith community, the civil liberties community, the human rights community, the education community, the business community and the labor community all coming together to say, Congress, do something. And by the way, Congress, not do something like create some new program or do some new policy. It's, Congress, fix this. Only you can do it, Congress. The States can't do it. The States don't have control over this. Some nonprofit or private organization can't do it. Only the Federal Government and only the United States Congress can replace our broken immigration system with one that works for our country, one that reflects our country's need for human capital, for talent, for ideas and for innovation, one that helps make sure that we attract the best and brightest and hardest-working people from across the world to deploy their talents here to make our country stronger in a legal way, one that restores the trust with law enforcement, improves public safety in our communities, allows community policing and police officers to win the trust that's so critical for them to fight crime that affects all of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to talk about a commonsense issue that's received a lot of discussion in the press and continues to be on many of our minds, and that's how we can reduce violent crime in this country, gun violence and senseless murder and deaths that occur.

Now, this is no easy question. My focus here has always been improving education. I truly believe that improving our schools and making sure that our kids have access to the great opportunity that this country offers is the best way that we can reduce crime.

□ 1930

But we can do more, Mr. Speaker. We can do more in a commonsense way to

make it harder for criminals to acquire weapons.

Now, how can we do this? Many States have already led the way. My home State of Colorado has long had a rule that has closed the gun show loophole and made sure that people that buy guns at gun shows have the same type of background check they would at a gun dealer. I think that's a commonsense rule that we should do nationally.

I also think we need a national way to make sure that when somebody buys a gun, that there's a background check. In doing so, we need to make sure that there's no national registry of gun owners. We need to protect gun owners' privacy. We want to make sure it doesn't inconvenience law-abiding Americans who want to be able to buy guns at dealers—and have done so and will continue to do so. But this is easy to accomplish. The Senate discussed such a bill. I understand there are several proposals, as well, in this body. And I have seen data. This has broad support from the American people, and it should be a commonsense idea for many of us.

There are people in this country who have lost the right to bear arms because they've committed a crime—armed robbery or rape—and as part of a judicial sentence they have lost that right. They may have lost the right to vote as well. Now, you're not going to stop them from getting a knife or a gun—no law will stop them from doing that—but we should make it harder. We should make it so they can't just go to a gun show and buy a gun for cash. There should be a background check to make sure that the person buying the gun is a law-abiding American and has the right to do that. I think law-abiding Americans want to protect their Second Amendment rights and want to make sure that it's not abused by criminals. I think that's a common step measure that I call upon my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take up and pass to help reduce violence in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about the urgent need to improve our schools. Across our country we have schools that many parents would be proud to send their kids to. We also have schools that continue to fail year after year, that anybody who has the means to have choice—meaning, they're able to afford to be able to drive their kids somewhere else or pay a private school tuition—would never send their kids to that school. Thus, families that are essentially forced to have their kids go to that school have no choice, have no alternative. It's incumbent upon our school districts, our States, and, yes, our Federal Government because we, too, fund part of public education through IDEA, special education, to ensure that those schools don't continue to operate the way that they have been.

That's why I introduced last session and will introduce again a school turn-

around bill. This bill will help address the lowest 5 percent of schools, the bottom performing 5 percent. We're talking about high schools that are dropout factories, where half the kids that go in the front door in 9th grade don't graduate in 12th grade. We're losing half of them. And what options do you have in life to support yourself and your family if you don't have a high school degree? It's hard, and it's getting harder in the 21st century information economy, Mr. Speaker.

We need to turn around these schools, make the tough choices, empower the superintendents of those school districts to use the creativity that they have to turn those schools around. And we need to make sure that they take action. As I told one of our local superintendents in Colorado, our goal, through public policy at the Federal level, should be to give you, the superintendent, the flexibility for you to be able to do what works but not the flexibility to do nothing, because we know that in doing nothing we will fail to change models that fail.

And whether the model that works is turning it into a charter school or extending the learning day or closing it down and opening three new schools in the same building, there's a lot of options, and many more, that a superintendent can choose from and apply, depending on the community needs and the buy-in from parents and families, which are important to make any education reform work. But it's critical that they take action, because without taking action, they're guaranteed more of the same.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support comprehensive immigration reform today. In my time on the floor in the last hour—and I could continue for even longer to articulate all of the reasons why comprehensive immigration reform benefits our country. Whether one cares about the safety of our communities from crime, whether one cares about the public health and infectious disease, restoring the rule of law, securing our borders, preventing terrorism, growing our economy, high-skills jobs, making sure that our farmers can thrive and grow, making sure that families stay together so that their American kids can grow up in wholesome family homes, for all these reasons and more, I call upon my colleagues to support comprehensive immigration reform.

I thank the Speaker for the time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

CORE AMERICAN BELIEFS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MULLIN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROKITA) for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROKITA. I want to start out this evening by saying it's been a busy day here in the Capitol and it's been a busy week—some of it good, a lot of it not so

good. But it caused me to come to the floor tonight to talk with my colleagues, talk with the Speaker about some of the things that really are our core values, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans.

First of all, let me say that all of us—Republicans, Democrats, all Americans—believe in diversity, and we are here as a Congress in so many respects to celebrate that diversity. A great, free Republic like this is going to have divergent views, divergent opinions. We're going to have diversity in just about everything we do, everything we say, everything we are, and that's okay. We are open to all races, genders, and other classifications.

We're a family. We're one big national family. And like any other family, we're going to have our struggles, we're going to have our disagreements. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm here to remind us all tonight that that's okay. That's what it means to be in a free Republic. Because the alternative is much, much worse. You see, the alternative is not being able to have diversity at all, not being able to have an opinion different than the commanders at all, not being able to have free speech or free association.

Mr. Speaker, like any family, we face issues that make it difficult—especially seemingly these days—to find consensus. And like any family, we need to have open and honest dialogue, preferably without yelling or judging each other.

Just like any other family, the neighbors down the street, so to speak, are going to be judging us, be watching us. We don't have to worry so much about them, just to make sure that we continue having our discussion in a respectful way.

Like I said, although we have severe disagreements over some issues, there are core things that we all should be about, regardless of our diversity otherwise. I want to go through some of those tonight.

For example, we believe in the power of the individual, not the power of government over the individual. This isn't a Republican theme, although I am a Republican. This is a constitutional theme. This is what our Founders fought for and wrote for in those two great documents we call the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

We believe, as Americans, that people are capable of making their own decisions—for example, about health care—much better than government can. And, Mr. Speaker, we saw a great debate on that very point just a few hours ago on the very floor of this very House. It is because individuals, families, and people can make decisions for themselves, regardless of whatever it is, better than the government can that I oppose this Affordable Care Act, that we oppose ObamaCare.

We believe that freedom is more when government is less—this is called the power of individualism over collec-

tivism—and it's key, it's key to what this country has been successful about for over 200 years. But perhaps it's better to illustrate what I'm talking about when you realize what happens when freedom is absent.

I want you to take a look at this view from space. This is the Korean Peninsula, and here is the dividing line between North and South Korea.

□ 1940

It is obviously taken at night. And what you are seeing is an actual representation of the lights in both countries, lights generated from electricity by power plants, lights that in South Korea show bustling commerce, show vitality, show economic freedom, show individual freedom.

But look to North Korea. Almost complete darkness. Only one group of lights right around here. The capital city of North Korea where all the elites live, more specifically where all the government officials live, and more specifically than that where all the government officials in a closed tyrannical society live.

Freedom is more when government is less, when government is limited. We believe that the best way to ensure that government remains limited is to stop feeding it so much. Around here, the government's food, what it lives on, what it grows on day by day is money; what it grows on is our tax dollars. More and more these days it is also growing on the taxes of individuals who don't even exist yet, Mr. Speaker—the children of tomorrow. Yes, they are being taxed here today. It is called our nearly \$17 trillion worth of debt. And it is also represented by the \$100 trillion of debt that is on its way. I would like to get to that in a minute.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that money is the fruit of our labor. We believe that money is our property, the same way this suit is my property, the same way that the land and the homes that some of us may own are our property, the same way that a bicycle that we ride might be our property, so is our money. We believe that when government taxes us, they confiscate our property, and that that property is the fruit of our labor.

We can't forget that. I remember recently being in my district, and specifically in the city of Lafayette, a great place, and West Lafayette, home of Purdue University. And I was struck at a Rotary Club meeting when I used the term "confiscation" to describe what government does with our property in the form of taxation and got a good degree of pushback—very annoyed with me that I would use such a word to describe what government does—confiscation of our property—when clearly the government needs our money in order to function.

And that's true. Government absolutely has a valid role in a free society, as long as it remains in a limited form. And more and more, Mr. Speaker, what

I see being debated here on this House floor, and when I see us enact in terms of laws some new laws, some laws that have been on the books for years, is government being involved in things that the Constitution and the people and the free society do not require, in fact, should not have the government be doing.

We believe that individuals, families, communities are always better at making decisions for ourselves than government is. Today, some believe that just having more power over your life, if they could have that kind of control, it would be that much better.

For example, they believe they have the right to tell you what kind of light bulbs to buy, they believe that you should only be able to buy cars with certain gas mileage standards, they believe that they have a right to dictate what goes inside your child's lunchbox before they go to school, and at school they believe they have the right to make sure your child learns certain things, but also to make certain that they don't learn other things. They believe that they can make better health care decisions for you than you can. They believe through the EPA that they can tell you how much electricity to use. And under the guise of making things cleaner, they are simply controlling your life.

That is not America; that is not Americans. We believe the opposite. The Founders knew exactly that the opposite was true—that decisions are best made by individuals and communities at the local level.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we believe that government is the servant of the people and that people aren't the servants of government.

Right now, we in the House are fighting to hold the executive branch accountable for a possible cover-up in Benghazi. This is not only about lives being lost, but about trust being breached. The Obama administration lied about the cause—Islamic terrorism—then they tried to cover their tracks. And now they claim that those of us who are demanding the truth are the ones who are politicizing the situation.

The executive branch owes the people the truth. It is basic accountability. They are our servants; we are not theirs.

We also believe in the right of a free press. Unfortunately, right now we have a Department of Justice that tries to spy on and intimidate members of the press. We found out in recent days that through subpoenas, which is a government action, individual reporters' names, their cell phones, and their phone records have been compromised, have been taken by the Federal Government.

It is my opinion that this administration is simply afraid of being held accountable, whether it is by a free press or by this Congress. Now, the Founders knew that both the free press and Congress with oversight are necessary to prevent tyranny. That is why

our job is so important today. That is why Americans are expecting and counting on us to take the Benghazi investigation, to take the AP, as it is called, the Associated Press, investigation as far as it goes until we find out what the truth is.

Perhaps a fundamental right is the one of free speech. It is the one that is absolutely necessary in a free society. It is the one that is core and fundamental in our Bill of Rights.

But, today, Mr. Speaker, we have an IRS that is targeting groups of private citizens simply because of their political beliefs, violating their right of free speech and violating their right of free association. This is nothing more than an abuse of power. It violates the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under the law and should frighten each one of us, regardless of political party.

I guarantee you this, Mr. Speaker, this American, along with many others in this Congress, is going to go as far as we need to go with this investigation in order to find the full truth. The government must remain a servant of the people and not the other way around.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in giving a hand up, not necessarily a handout, because we believe that hand up is what made America strong, while a handout is what basically caused other nations in history to fail, resulting ultimately in tyranny.

A government can't be all things to all people; it can't do everything for everybody. It has been tried before. This is not a new idea, Mr. Speaker. But every time it has been tried in our history, it has resulted in terrible tyranny or ultimate failure altogether.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker. Approximately 48 million Americans are on food stamps, more than at any other point in our history. Now, I know we have been going through some tough times, but that is not because too few people are getting food stamps.

The government is handing out free cell phones; but welfare programs are supposed to be for the poorest of the poor, for those who need that hand up. We shouldn't be giving handouts.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we are. Just look at the facts. Under the Census Bureau's definition of "poor," 80 percent of poor households have air-conditioning. In 1970, only 36 percent of the entire U.S. population enjoyed air-conditioning. Ninety-two percent of poor households have a microwave. Nearly three-fourths have a car or truck, and 31 percent have two or more cars or trucks.

□ 1950

Nearly two-thirds have cable or satellite TV. Two-thirds have at least one DVD player, and 70 percent have a VCR. These are all poor households. These are mostly households that would qualify also for food stamps and for other welfare programs. Half of

them have a personal computer, and one in seven have two or more computers. Forty-three percent have Internet access. One-third has a wide-screen plasma or LCD TV.

Now, we are a giving Nation. We want to help out. Our volunteerism and our charity work are second to none in this entire world. It is actually part of our American exceptionalism. It is what makes us unique and different from any other place on this Earth. I'd like to know the American who thinks that given everything I've just listed that that fits his definition of "poor" and that that's whom we should be helping and not others who really, really need, again, that temporary hand up and not the permanent handout.

We believe in the freedom of individuals to make their own choices and also in the responsibility to live with the choices that they make. Perhaps more than anything else I've said here tonight, we are losing sight of that in this Congress, in this Federal Government.

The free enterprise system is a beautiful system. It's a wonderful system that rewards risks and rewards those who do useful work. Is it a perfect system? Absolutely not. Is it the best system ever devised by man to raise the condition of all men? Absolutely. Nothing in history has ever compared to it, and no experimentation that we are going to do now—mind you, they're not new experiments; these experiments have been tried—is going to make it any better. The free enterprise system absolutely works.

We believe that each generation should leave the next generation better off to enjoy life, to enjoy liberty, to enjoy the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, everyone knows on the floor of this House and elsewhere, day by day, that we are not leaving the next generation better off, that we are going to be the first generation in the history of this great Nation—based on the facts, based on our budget, based on our debt, based on our standard of living—that will not leave the next generation better off if we don't start living within our means again and if we don't stop printing and borrowing the money that we are to fund this beast called the Federal Government.

The Book of Proverbs commends hard work and enjoying the fruits of one's labor. With the money we earn, we provide for our families, and we can bless other people who are in need. Proverbs says: "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children." I can't think of a higher source to make the point. We are breaking the promise to the next generation.

The good news is that, again, these are our core values. They're not Republican core values necessarily, and they're not Democrat ones. They are American ones. You might find things that sound like them in the Democratic Party platform. I know we practice them in the Republican Party platform, but, again, they're not ours—they're America's.

Everything I've said here tonight is defined explicitly in the Constitution—that great founding document that is, in my opinion, the core of our American exceptionalism. Now, when I say "American exceptionalism," it's not that I'm thinking about it as our President has thought about it. I don't mean to say that we are a country that judges others. I don't even mean to say that we are a country that thinks categorically we're better than everyone else. Like I said at the outset, we have our own struggles in this family, this national family, but the fact of the matter is we are different, and it's this document—this Constitution—that, in large part, sets off that difference. Here is why:

The Constitution and the core values it contains—the things that I've just recited—all represent the best ideas for self-governance that the world has ever known. Never before in world history have those ideas ever come together at the same time and in the same place except for in the United States Constitution. That's unique. That makes us exceptional.

Now, the President when asked about this said, Oh, yes, America is exceptional. We believe we are exceptional just like the Brits think they're exceptional and just like the Germans might think they're exceptional—entirely missing the point and lacking the understanding of the founding of this country.

I bring that up today, Mr. Speaker, to get the word out, to make a record in this House of Representatives, that that's not at all what this country was about. Again, it doesn't mean we're judging. It doesn't mean we think we are better. We are different, we are unique, and we are the best experiment in self-governance the world has ever known. The only thing that can mess that up, that can destroy that exceptionalism, is us. That's what brings me to the floor at 8 o'clock on a Thursday night. It's important stuff.

In my time remaining, I'd like to focus on this debt that I've mentioned a few times now. Of all the issues that we face, of all the issues that we can properly and rightfully alleviate as a Federal Government, as a Congress, it's this spending. That is one of our chartered things, one of our enumerated powers, to set a budget of this Federal Government's size and its spending levels—and we have failed.

As I talk with you tonight, we are nearly \$17 trillion in debt, but that's not even the half of it. The worst part, Mr. Speaker, is this red section—this \$100 trillion that's on the way in the next 25 or so years. Do you see how vertical that line goes? The real fear is that, if we don't get our spending under control now, we might never be able to catch it. The fact of the matter is that the drivers of our debt—the social entitlement program of Medicaid, the health care program of Medicare, Social Security, the net interest we owe ourselves and other countries—mean

that it's growing so fast we may never be able to catch it. That's a huge problem.

Now, the slides I'm showing the House tonight are not TODD ROKITA slides. They are the House Budget Committee slides. The Democrats on the House Budget Committee don't disagree with the data. There certainly is disagreement about how to fix the problem, but more and more every day, more astonishingly, I find out that many believe there is not a problem with that graph I just showed you. Here is what the Federal Government is spending its money on. I pulled out two pieces of the pie to show that that's what we vote on in terms of our budget: non-defense discretionary and defense discretionary.

We call this funding "discretionary" because we can dial it up or we can dial it down depending on our wishes and our votes here in this Congress and if the Senate agrees or doesn't. Then the President chimes in, albeit late—certainly not on time—with his budget, but it all focuses on not more than about 40 percent of our total Federal spending. The rest of it is all on autopilot. We don't get to dial it up or dial it down. I don't get to decide what the retirees in this country will get in terms of a Social Security check. I don't get to decide what services they're going to get or what fees their health care providers are going to pay for those services through Medicare. That's all decided in the underlying, substantive bills we've passed regarding those programs.

Unless we amend those programs, unless we amend that law, we will never get to what's driving most of our debt, representing about two-thirds of our Federal spending. Again, Social Security: \$768 billion per year; Medicare: \$466 billion per year; Medicaid: \$251 billion per year; the interest we owe ourselves and other countries for this debt: \$223 billion per year; other mandatory spending that I can't dial up or dial down nor can you, Mr. Speaker: \$547 billion per year—all on autopilot. Until we get to this, we will never get to reducing or to even stabilizing our debt. That's the problem.

□ 2000

Some people have asked about military spending. Some people have asked about cutting it more, even though we've had drastic cuts already. Some people have asked about foreign aid spending. Some people have asked about earmark spending and wouldn't that solve the problem.

I believe that all that should be looked at, including the military. This is a Republican saying that. I believe there is tremendous waste, fraud, and abuse in our military system. I think it's immoral to have that waste, fraud, and abuse and not get every possible dollar we can to the troops.

But having said that, even if we had no military, it would only solve 20 percent of our Federal spending; and, of

course, one of our first constitutional duties is to provide for the common defense. A military is necessary. It needs to be run a lot better. And there's a lack of leadership right now amongst our military ranks. It's not leading when you come here to the Congress asking for more money for your pet projects and not doing what you can to eliminate the waste, fraud, and abuse in the military.

I know there's waste, fraud, and abuse in the military because they can't even be audited. It's not because there's a statute, Mr. Speaker, against them being audited. It's because they can't even bring themselves to an audit table to be audited. They're so big and they're so sloppy; they don't know what they spend their money on most of the time. That is wrong. That's wrong for our troops.

Regarding the social entitlement programs, regarding our health care programs, many folks come to me and say, Wait a minute, I paid into those programs. I've been paying into those programs through my paycheck all my life. Don't you dare call them "social entitlement programs." You know what? They're right. We do pay into these programs—most of us—through our working lives.

Here's another truth, and here's a more specific truth, Mr. Speaker. Look at this graph. On average, a couple who made \$71,000 or so per year through their working lives—this is about Medicare—will have paid in about 35 percent of what they're actually taking out of Medicare. And that 65 percent difference, Mr. Speaker, that comes out of our kids. That comes out of the grandchildren that don't exist yet. That's part of our national debt. That's part of the \$17 trillion and the \$100 trillion that's coming. That's what's wrong.

We are taxing the children of tomorrow who don't have any voice in this, except for mine, yours, and others who decide to stand for them. They don't have any voice in this. We're taxing them so, frankly, we can have more on our plate now. That's what's got to stop. It's got to stop with the debt ceiling that's going to come up probably for a vote this fall.

Which way will we go, Mr. Speaker? What will we do to ensure that the children of tomorrow don't have to pay for the bills of today? It will take courage. Frankly, it will take, Mr. Speaker, more than this Congress. We can't wait for Washington to do this alone. We need the help of the people; and that's why I take to the floor tonight ultimately, Mr. Speaker, to get the word out.

I know that this American family, once they know the facts, once they know the truth, they will speak that truth to power. They will demand change; they will demand to live within their means again because that's what every American generation has done before, wanting the next one to be better off. That's what Americans today want too.

I tell this to you, Mr. Speaker, and all the Members of this House, that when there's a direct conflict between the people in the here and now and the people of tomorrow—those without a voice, those who don't exist yet—that's why they don't have the voice—when there's that direct conflict in terms of a vote on an issue, on a bill, at every turn we ought to be thinking about the kids. We ought to be thinking about the grandchildren; we ought to be thinking about those who don't yet exist. And we ought to vote for them, even if it means voting against us in the here and now.

And the debt ceiling is an opportunity to do that, because if and when we raise this debt ceiling, the amount we raise it by will simply be another tax on top of a debt that we've already given them.

What are we going to get for that? If they have to pay that tax, how can we ensure through reform that these programs and other items, that by the time they become an age of majority, that they won't have to pay that kind of debt load? That's the question before us.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time. I thank this House for the time. I thank the staff for their work, and I look forward to talking with this House again about these issues throughout the summer.

I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today and for the balance of the week on account of a minor surgery due to unforeseen medical reasons.

Mrs. WAGNER (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today and for the balance of the week on account of her son, Stephen Wagner's graduation from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, May 17, 2013, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1505. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter regarding the Department's support of the National Boy Scout Jamboree; to the Committee on Armed Services.

1506. A letter from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Native